

Boston Aug. 25th 1840.

Rev J. A. James

Dear Sir,

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Although personally a stranger to you, yet sharing as I do the same religious denomination with yourself, & sympathizing with you fully on the slave question, I venture to address you on the subject of this letter, leaving it to you, to make such use or none of the information I communicate, as you may judge best.

In the British Emancipator of Nov 27. 1839. I find a report of the proceedings of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society's Annual meeting. Among the speakers on that occasion was the Rev Mr Hoop, Agent of the Oberlin Institution who after alluding to the existence & prevalence of American prejudices against the negro, said:—

"It was for the purpose of removing this prejudice that the Oberlin Institution had been established; for at the present time a slave could not be instructed. But in this institution the colored race would be put on an equality with the white, & introduced into the society of those whose friendship would prove useful in breaking down in after life, the unnatural barriers which divided them."

In the same paper of Oct 2. 1839, I find a "petition" addressed to the Mayor, Aldermen & common council of London by subscribers & friends of the Oberlin Institution in aid of the Abolition of slavery in the United States. (such is the style of the petition) in which the institution is spoken of in the same way as if ^{it were the only in-} ~~the only in-~~ ~~stitution in the country,~~ where the black, the white, & the colored man, are educated & taught together; & it is added that the "few men who have been raised up as the advocates of the oppressed, & who have devoted themselves & their all to his needed & benevolent work, have

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united in the opinion that the present crisis of the Anti-slavery cause in the United States justifies an appeal to the philanthropists of Great Britain on behalf of the Oberlin Institution "as if there were but one opinion among abolitionists on this side of the water in respect to the claims of that institution on the charities of the Christian public, which is far from being true. If you examine the letter of introduction with which the agents of that institution were furnished when they went to England, I think you will find that there are several, who have done their full share in bearing the burden & heat of the Anti-slavery struggle here, whose names are not there. The reasons, in my own case, were that I was doubtful whereunto its religious peculiarities would grow, & that I thought the letter exalted Oberlin at the expense of other institutions. ^{It was offered me to sign, & my name solicited.}

Again, in the British & Foreign A. S. Reporter May 6. 1840, in the Annual Report of the Liverpool A. S. Society, is the following — "The Oberlin Institute for affording education to all classes, abolishing the distinctions of color, was formed." At the same meeting at which this report was adopted, the Rev Mr. Keep is reported as saying — "A school was also commenced into which the black man, & white man were admitted together. The place such was the opposition, was in a dense & remote forest near Lake Erie."

From these extracts it is obvious, that the general tone of the representations upon which the claims of Oberlin are urged upon the British public, is this — 1st The grand design of Oberlin, aside from the mere giving of an education, is to make war upon American flagrant justice, & so facilitate the overthrow of slavery. 2^d. It was this design especially, if not mainly, that originated the institution, & originated it because there were no other institutions where education could be thus had irrespective of color. 3^d. Therefore Oberlin is virtually the only institution into which the black & white are admitted together. 4th. It was located in the forest, at the far West, because the colorphobia opposition was so violent, that it could ^{not} be safely located elsewhere.

Now deserving as Oberlin is, on account of its abolition character & influence, the facts do not warrant, I think, such representations. 1. I begin with Dartmouth College, at Hanover, N. Hampshire. Rev. N. Lord, D. D. is its President. He owned

himself an immediate abolitionist⁽³⁾ as early as 1833, but for various reasons, has never associated himself with any anti-slavery society. The character of his abolition you will learn in a letter from a colored man, by the name of Lewis, in one of the papers I send you. Prof. Peabody, lately deceased, was a thoroughly going abolitionist. A large portion of the students are abolitionists, & are permitted to examine & discuss the abolition question, & seek its promotion just as freely as they are any thing else. This institution admits all to its privileges without respect of nation or complexion. It is almost its pride that it began as a school for the education of Indians, & has almost uninterruptedly had ~~some~~ aborigines in its lists. It has one in the graduating class of this year; a Seneca Chief, & a highly respectable & promising young man. An African has never been refused because he was an African. In a single instance the application of a colored young man, a few years ago, was negatived, but not on the ground of his color. Two other applications only have been made for admission to the College. One was the case of Edward Mitchell, a young man from the South. He was received to an equality of privilege with all other students, was of excellent character, graduated honorably, & is now a respectable Baptist minister somewhere in Vermont or New York. He was of the class of 1828 - before the abolition movement ~~in~~ present form began. The other was since the movement began - was that of a son of the late Rev. Mr. Paul of this city. He is now a member of the Junior class, a very unexceptionable young man, having the confidence & kind regards of the Faculty & his fellow students. He also is contemplating the ministry in the Baptist denomination, & will doubtless, if Providence shall spare him, be very acceptable & useful in that relation. These statements are made on authority that may be relied on. From another source, I learn also, as an illustration of the feelings of the students towards them, that the Seneca chief is President of one of their literary ~~societies~~ societies, & that the colored man is Vice President of one of them.

2. Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Me. Prof. Smith of this institution was among the earliest, & has ever been one of the most active of the abolitionists in this country. One year he edited the Voice of Freedom, the organ of the Maine Abolitionists, in addition to his professional duties; & one or more years he has been the Secretary of their State Anti-Slavery Society, & drafted their Annual Report. & indeed he did more than any other ^{one} man in securing its formation, in 1834. It was the first State Society formed auxiliary to the American A. S. Society. I have before me a letter from Prof S. of which the following is an extract.

In answer to your inquiry, I would state that Bowdoin College always has been open to young men of color, on equal terms with others. Colored men are citizens in this state, & as such are equally entitled to all the privileges of our common schools & public seminaries. The College could not, if disposed, interpose any obstacle to the full enjoyment of its advantages by young men of color. Nor would there be any disposition to do this on the part of either the Faculty or Boards of Trust, even if they had the power. Mr. Quin, now Governor, I believe of ~~one~~ one of the Colonies in Liberia, went through the regular course of instruction here. He was always treated with kindness by his classmates - was never annoyed on account of his color, but on the contrary, secured the respect & sympathy of all. I have no doubt that young men of color, of respectable talents & industrious habits, will be well received by the students at the present time, & that they would be able equally as others, to secure the rank to which their merits would entitle them. We do not invite such here, for the reason that we give special invitation to none. Our doors are open to all without respect to ~~gender or color~~ condition or color who possess the requisite qualifications. I have noticed statements similar to those to which you refer. They are altogether ~~unjust~~ unjust, at least as far as this College is concerned. I know of no friend of the College, or of education in the state, who would not be gratified to see the young men of color among us, availing themselves of the advantages for the acquisition of a liberal education, which the College offers, & by its charter is bound to afford equally to all."

3. Oneida Institute, Whitesboro (near Utica) New York

This institution is somewhat unique in its character. It is not a College, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. It dispenses with Latin & Greek, except the Greek of the New Testament & some of the Fathers. At the same time it gives a four years course of study, & designs it to be equivalent to the usual College course. Its President is Rev Beriah Green. whose character as a scholar, Christian, & abolitionist, you will learn in detail of Capt Charles Stuart, now in Great Britain. In answer

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to my inquiries he writes me ~~as follows~~ July 21st as follows. —

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The above was written in reply to a letter of inquiry from me, on the several topics named. In the extract you see the man disdaining the small business of accounting his trials & persecutions in the cause of humanity, & yet he & his institution have, in my judgment, done & suffered more for the slave, than Oberlin & all its officers together. The first important public discussion on Colonization in this country was in Boston, between Robert Finley Esq. of Colonization, & Elowen Wright Jr. (a brother Professor with Mr. Green in the Western Reserve College, & an intimate & known friend for abolition). The second & more important one, & which attracted the attention of the entire country, was at Utica between President Green on the one side & Rev Mr. Danforth Colonization agent on the other. In its result, it was regarded as a glorious triumph for abolition. From that time onward President Green has been incessant in his labors, both with his tongue & pen, for the slave. He has almost without exception, been present & borne a conspicuous part in in all our great Anti-Slavery conventions & anniversaries. The productions of his pen in the cause have been of the highest order, & would fill a good sized octavo volume. His lectures & addresses have been numberless almost, & have been given in seasons out of season. The Institution over which he presides has always been open, on equal terms to all, of every color. In the letter from which I have just quoted, Pres Green says, "I know not what number of colored students we have had, we have at this time, including Indian-blood about twenty." a larger number I venture to say than Oberlin has ever had during the whole period of its existence. Nor has the influence of Pres. Green been powerless on the subject. As early as 1836. his movements attracted the attention of the State Legislature & subjected the Institution to legislative persecution — a kind of persecution that Oberlin has never yet known. Mr David Wager of Utica offered to the Senate of New York, early in that year, a resolution which was adopted, directing the Committee on Literature to inquire into the propriety of denying the Oneida Institute all participation in the benefit of the Literature Fund." The plea in support of the resolution was, that the Institution was

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"the hot bed of sedition"; that it exerted a political influence; that B. Green had been active in propagating the doctrines of abolition &c. & all because, both among officers & students, there was freedom of thought & speech & action on the subject of abolition. Immediately a convention was called at Andover, of the friends of freedom, to remonstrate against the contemplated ~~proscription~~ legislative proscription. At that convention the following resolutions among others were passed:—

Resolved, That in the late attack upon the Oneida Institute, in the Senate of this State, we see strong symptoms of an intention to create, in direct opposition to the spirit of our Constitution, & an express statute, a test, by which the instructors & students of our public schools, may be deprived of the benefits to which they are fairly entitled, for refusing to subserve the designs of a political party."

Resolved, That the recent attempt in our Legislature to diminish the pecuniary resources, & to tarnish the character of Oneida Institute, on the ground that its officers & students vote as they please, & embrace a religion which pronounces slavery to be a sin, is not only a dangerous infringement of our political compact, but a daring & wicked invasion of God's moral government."

"Other resolutions speak of the institution as having the honesty & courage to set itself against the abomination of slavery," & as established "especially for youth in humble life" — "the coarse clad & hard handed sons of honest poverty."

Genl. Smith Esq. made a speech on the occasion, in which he spoke of the assault as intended for a peace offering to the South, & said:—

"It was thought advisable, in order to ~~secure~~ the satisfaction of the South more sure, to make a legislative pro-slavery dash at the Oneida Institute. I admire the cunning which was displayed in the selection of this school. Glad it been a school of an ordinary character, not even the inculus of slavery, which presses upon the whole length & breadth of the State, could have restrained the general expression of indignation at this outrage. But they selected a school of a peculiar character — the first manual labor school ever established in our country — a school which is emphatically the poor boy's school, & one where, to use the language of the resolutions before you, the coarse clad, & hard handed sons of honest poverty, may have an opportunity to improve their minds. &c. They selected a school prominent for its

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opposition to Slavery, & intemperance, & lewdness, & the other prevalent vices of our country. They knew too that the combination of manual labor with study, was not yet so general in our country as to be popular. They knew, too, of the odium which rested on efforts to abolish slavery, & to advance the principles of that thorough temperance which is advocated in the Quacra Institute. Then their, Sir, was a school so weak in the public sympathy, that its assailants would have nothing to fear from its insignificant avengers." while yet the sacrifice would appease the South. + + + On the present occasion, Sir, we have a special duty to perform in aid of the sacred cause of anti-slavery. The Providence of God affords us an eminently favorable opportunity to test the sincerity of our devotion to this cause. By extending a helping hand to this school which has fallen under pro-slavery vengeance, we shall be giving good proof of our appreciation of the great principles of that cause. These principles, the Quacra Institute has had the courage & the honesty to espouse. With these principles, hated, yet beautiful - persecuted, but one day triumphant & glorious - she has ever dared to identify herself. She has made common cause with them & nobly determined that their fate shall be hers." (Chas. Wright's letter)

For further information of Bur Green & the Institute, I refer you to Capt. Chailes Stuart, whom I hope you will by all means see, & to the documents I send you in the same mail with this. Such was & is Quacra Institute. Glad its President & friends seen as boastful as they might have been of the mobs, reproaches, labors, self denials, legislative proscription & remarks of the mobs, to which it & its Pres. have been subject on account of their position on the slavery & prejudice question, it might doubtless have figured as largely in the Martyr Age, as any kindred institution. You have yet to learn perhaps that the Martyr Age has not a little of romance in it, along with much of fact, & that there is much of fact not on record there, which has more of martyrdom in it, than there is in some of that which is on record. Of this I may advise you more fully hereafter, should Providence permit.

4. Cherlin Institute. Of its excellencies you have heard. It is not my province now to speak of them. There it, I should have much to say in its praise. The romance record of its early history you have read in the Martyr Age. It is mine now to reconcile romance to sober fact, & while I admit many & great excellencies, to state those drawbacks upon the representations of these excellencies, which truth demands, & which are necessary, that the institutions may stand before the public on its real merits. The task is an unwelcome one, yet it is one which duty summons.

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to me to demand at my hands, & therefore though I would gladly be excused from it, I proceed.

You have already seen that Oberlin is far from being the only institution in this country where black & white are taught together, on equal terms. I have no doubt that there are a few other institutions where the same is true. I have written to these & obtained the facts above, because I happened to be personally acquainted with the officers, & with the leading facts they communicate. At the same time it must be borne in mind, that our institutions generally do not admit students irrespective of color. Far otherwise.

Farther, it is not true that Oberlin was located in a dense & remote forest, near Lake Erie, because the opposition was so great that it could not be located farther East. This is proved by the fact that Oneida Institute has always had more or less colored students in it, & yet it is located near Utica, in the heart of New York, & one of the most populous districts in the State.

Nor is it true that the great & characteristic design of Oberlin was to wage a war upon prejudice, & that this design in connexion with the impossibility of finding institutions where colored & white people could be educated on the same terms, originated Oberlin. Nothing can be farther from the truth than any such representation. Indeed Lane Seminary itself, out of whose prohibition of free discussion, Oberlin in its present form originated, had a black man, James Bradley, ^{once a slave}, among its students, who was admitted ^{on equal terms} to all the privileges of the institution, & took part in the famous abolition debate at the time of the explosion there. The prejudice question was not the question at issue at all. The government at Lane made no issue with the students that ground, but only on the ground of the free discussion of slavery & its abolition. This is not the prejudice question, was the question out of which Oberlin in its present form arose. Of course, in going for the questions of free discussion, Oberlin went for the other also. But in doing the latter, it did no more than Lane had done before; & Oneida, & Dartmouth & Bowdoin before either.

The simple facts in the case are these. A great cry had been raised in the East concerning the "spiritual wants of the Empire West". It was felt that the West could never depend for an adequate supply of men, upon the institutions of the East. Hence, a great institution must be planted in the West itself, to rear up men on the spot, who, during their education, would become so habituated to the customs & feelings, & so conversant with the present wants of the country, that, though from the East, they would yet naturally, as they went out into the field of active & professional life, locate at the West. Under a auspices, unusually

promising, Lane Seminary was started. In ~~conception~~ ^{conception} plan & commencement it was a noble institution - admirably adapted to its great work. With a man at its head, whose past history & hold upon the confidence of the churches gave high promise of future success, some twenty or thirty of the choicest spirits in the land, a large portion of them from Andover Institute itself, with Theodore D. Weld at their head, made that the institution of their choice, & repaired to it for the prosecution of their studies. Very soon the slave question came up. The students entered upon its examination & discussion. The government of the Institution faltered, & doing homage to the slave power, prohibited discussion! It was a false & fatal step. The young men - for these "boys," as they were termed, were men in intellect & most of them in years, had but one alternative, silence or removal. They chose the latter. What should they do & where should they go? They wished to prosecute their studies. They looked with longing eyes to the West as their future field of labor. The wants of the great West still clamored for a supply. Most of them were poor - their manual labor & self supporting "boys" of Andover, & could not well incur the expense of a return to the East. They were a band of brethren too, the more so for the oppression that had driven them from their beloved Lane, & they did not wish to separate. They hired a room or house, in or near Cincinnati, & prosecuted their studies awhile among themselves, under the direction of some of their own number. Meanwhile they were on the lookout for some institution at the West to which they might resort, & which should be made what Lane was designed to be. For the two great points to be secured were, first an institution for the West, & second an institution that should allow freedom of thought, speech & action on all subjects, that of slavery not excepted. Prof Morgan then professor at Lane, sympathized fully with them, & was ready to remove with them to any such institution. The same was true of Rev Mr McKim, then Pastor of one of the churches in Cincinnati. The project was conceived of forming a second Lane true to its original design. An inquiry into it was found that Oberlin which had received its act of incorporation sometime before, but which up to that time had no existence except that of a small select school or academy, & which but for this new project, probably never would have had

any other, had a charter large enough in its provisions, to allow of its being made an institution of the kind proposed. The location was a bad one - so regarded by all. But it was well known that a charter for a new institution in a different location, could not then be obtained of the Legislature. There was no other institution in Ohio or the West already incorporated, to which they could go & which on the whole met the case so well. Objections were accordingly made to this end to the Trustees of Oberlin, & by them accepted. And these were the considerations, & these alone, that decided the location of the institution "in a dense & remote forest near Lake Erie." The institution in its original form was there before. The opposition to be encountered from the equal admission of colored students did not once enter into the account. For as I have said, I have myself that driven her sons from her had such an one amongst the number.

It was arranged that Mr. Nathan should be President of the new institution, Mr. Morgan one of its professors, & that together they should select a board of instruction. Rev. C. G. Finney then of New York was at once fixed on as Professor of Didactic Theology - the Dr Beecher of the second Lane. He is & was expected to be the great man of the institution, from whom especially it should & does take its character. Has he been a President Green on the Abolition question?

Answer. He has occasionally alluded to the questions in his sermons, & when he has done so, has spoken in strong & decided terms of the sin of slavery, & the duty of immediate emancipation. With this exception, he has yet to preach his first entire sermon & to write his first pamphlet, & his first article of any length, in any periodical, on the subject. When the anti-slavery cause in its present form, came up, he was travelling in Europe for his health. On coming back he learned of the mobs of 1833 & 34, of the formation of the American A. S. Society &c, & found two of his principal elders Messrs Lewis Tappan & Wm Green, on the Executive Committee of the Society. His first act was to insist most strenuously that they should withdraw from the Committee, on the ground that they were too much absorbed with the subject of abolition, that their duties on the Committee interfered with their duties as members & elders of the church, that they ought to make the conversion of sinners their great business &c. With Mr Green he was successful. Mr Tappan stood firm. The result was alienation & a final disunion of the church. Mr Green & his friends commenced a new enterprise - the Tabernacle. When the building was completed, they withdrew

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[Aug. 1]

Dear Sir,

I have said but little in the foregoing communication in regard to the peculiarity of Obolism on the subject of Christian Perfection; because I find nothing on that subject in any of the Reports of the public speeches of Messrs Gump & Davies, yet from some conversation with the Rev Mr Kirk, I think you are not put in possession of the case as it is on that subject. He was not when he signed their letter, or gave them letters to his friends in Great Britain. This is ~~not~~ the place for me to go into that subject. I can only say that the doctrine is to all intents & purposes Wesley's doctrine on that subject - nothing more, nothing less. With some this would be a recommendation. With others it would not. For a full exposition of this subject as they hold it you can consult Mahan's Lectures in a little volume by itself, & Finney's Lectures, as published in the Obolism Evangelist. If they are not within your reach & you wish them, I will send them to you by the next boat. I shall be happy to communicate with you further upon this very kindred topic. The New York Observer & kindred prints are out upon the great Convention, & you in particular for the resolutions on church action. The action of the Convention on that subject however will ~~disprove~~ ^{do} good. They can't resist its influence if they try. Let me say however just here, that had as our churches & ministers are on the subject, I suspect the impressions of our English Brethren are somewhat erroneous. As was natural you have been told rather of the action those ecclesiastical bodies that have taken ground against abolition, than of those who have favored it. The representations which are sometimes made on this subject especially by the Garrison school are overdrawn. For instance nothing

is more common here than to represent the anti-slavery
cause as going forward, not only without the help, but
in spite of the church & clergy. Nothing is more false.
The church & clergy ~~far~~ as they are from being what they ought
to be as a whole on the subject, are yet far in advance of
the state & ^{the} mass of the people. Let me give you a single
fact. From data in my possession that can be relied on
I am sure that ~~five~~ ^{one} 3 of the clergy of all denominations in this
state are actual members of anti-slavery societies on the
principle of immediate emancipation, while less than
1 in 20 of the people are. I have a large number of similar
facts on the point, which I design at my first leisure
to give to the public. Please excuse me for troubling
you with this long epistle. I do it because I know
no other man to whom I supposed it so suitable
to send the information it contains. With much respect

I am yours, in the bonds of a common faith
W. A. Phelps.

P.S. You are at liberty to publish my communication
in regard to Charles if you think best, in whole or
in part, with my name attached or not, as you
please.

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